

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus [[(15)]] for treatment of foodstuffs for processing and subsequent drying, comprising

an endless conveyor belt [[(2)]] which along part of its length follows a helical path to form a stack [[(3)]], said helical path defining a central space [[(11)]] in the stack [[(3)]],

the conveyor belt [[(2)]] having passages for letting a flow of a gaseous medium in the vertical as well as horizontal direction through the stack [[(3)]],

~~characterised by~~

an end portion of the stack [[(3)]], in which said stack is vertically surrounded by an encapsulation [[(22)]],

a first means [[(26)]] for supplying supply of a first gaseous medium to said central space [[(11)]], and

a second means [[(29)]] for supplying supply of a second gaseous medium to said encapsulation [[(22)]],

said encapsulation [[(22)]] being arranged to direct the flow of the second gaseous medium in such a manner that it is passed in the vertical direction from said encapsulation [[(22)]] to the rest of the stack [[(3)]].

2. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which the first gaseous medium is humid water vapour [[(P1)]].

3. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which the first gaseous medium is saturated water vapour [[(PI)]].

4. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which the second gaseous medium is overheated water vapour [[(P2)]].

5. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which said encapsulation [[(22)]] is arranged at the upper part of the stack [[(3)]].

6. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which a first end closure [[(16)]] is arranged to cover the conveyor belt [[(2)]] at the upper edge of the encapsulation [[(22)]].

7. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which a second end closure [[(17)]] is arranged over the central space [[(11)]].

8. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which lateral pieces [[(7a, 7b)]] at a longitudinal edge of the conveyor belt [[(2)]] form an outer wall of the stack [[(3)]], which defines the stack outwards in the radial direction.

9. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which lateral pieces [[(7a, 7b)]] at a longitudinal edge of the conveyor belt [[(2)]] form an inner wall [[(9)]] of the stack [[(3)]] which defines the stack inwards in the radial direction to define said central space [[(11)]].

10. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which a third end closure [[(18)]] is arranged against the lowermost turn formed in the stack, said third end closure being arranged transversely of the central space [[(11)]] defined by the conveyor belt [[(2)]].

11. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 2 [[or 3]], in which the ~~first means (26) for supplying source of supply of humid or saturated~~ water vapour [[(P1)]] comprises a fan [[(28)]].

12. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which the conveying direction [[(V)]] of the conveyor belt [[(2)]] is arranged towards the encapsulation [[(22)]].

13. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which the stack [[(3)]] is arranged in a housing [[(23)]] comprising an inlet [[(24)]] and an outlet [[(25)]] for the conveyor belt [[(2)]].

14. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 13, in which the housing [[(23)]] further comprises a drain for draining off condensed water vapour.

15. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which the encapsulation [[(22)]] has one outer and one inner circumferential wall having the same height, vertically surrounding a portion of the stack [[(3)]].

16. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which the encapsulation [[(22)]] has one outer circumferential wall extending vertically along the full height of the stack [[(3)]], and one inner circumferential wall extending vertically along a portion of the stack, whereby said outer circumferential wall preferably optionally has openings or perforations along the portion of the stack [[(3)]] not covered by the inner circumferential wall.

17. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which the encapsulation [[(22)]] has one outer and one inner circumferential wall extending along the full height of the stack [[(3)]], whereby both walls have openings or perforations along a portion of the stack [[(3)]].

18. (Currently Amended) A method for treating foodstuffs for the purpose of processing and drying, comprising: ~~the following steps~~

(a) providing an endless conveyor belt [[(2)]] which along part of its length follows a helical path to form a stack [[(3)]], said conveyor belt [[(2)]] having passages for letting a flow of a gaseous medium through the stack [[(3)]] in the vertical as well as the horizontal direction, directions, wherein:

(i) the stack [[(3)]] defining a central space [[(11)]], and
(ii) the stack [[(3)]] comprising a lower non-encapsulated stack portion [[(21)]] and, adjacent thereto, an upper stack portion [[(20)]] which is encapsulated in the vertical direction by an encapsulation [[(22)]],

(b) supplying a flow of a first gaseous medium to said central space [[(11)]] for further conveyance to the non-encapsulated stack portion [[(20)]] through said passages for letting through a flow of a first gaseous medium in the horizontal direction,

(c) supplying a flow of a second gaseous medium to said upper encapsulated stack portion [[(20)]],

(d) wherein said encapsulation [[(22)]] directing the flow of the second gaseous medium in such a manner that it flows in an essentially vertical direction from said encapsulated stack portion [[(20)]] to said non-encapsulated stack portion [[(21)]], and

(e) the flow of the second gaseous medium, which enters the encapsulated stack portion [[(20)]] and flows essentially vertically downwards, affecting the flow of the first gaseous medium which is conveyed to the non-encapsulated stack portion [[(21)]] so that the first gaseous medium is prevented from flowing towards the encapsulated stack portion [[(20)]].

19. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 18, in which the first gaseous medium is humid water vapour [[(P1)]].

20. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 18, in which the first gaseous medium is saturated water vapour [[(P1)]].

21. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 18, in which the second gaseous medium is overheated water vapour [[(P2)]].

22. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 18, comprising the step of arranging the conveyor belt in a conveying direction [[(V)]] towards the encapsulated stack portion [[(20)]].

23. (New) An apparatus as claimed in claim 3, in which the source of supply of saturated water vapor comprises a fan.